

14. PRESENCE OF FRUIT OF *XANTHIUM STRUMARIUM* IN THE
NEST OF *PLOCEUS PHILIPPINUS*

On August 21, 1984 at Tatar Pur Mixed Plantation 'A' (Alwar, Rajasthan) when I was watching a colony of *Ploceus philippinus* situated on a tree of *Prosopis spicigera*, I came across a completed blind nest having closed entrance tube. I removed the nest from the tree and examined its inside, bisecting it into two halves with scissors. I was surprised to see an old fruit of *Xanthium strumarium* inside the egg-chamber. A little search showed

an uprooted old plant of *X. strumarium* in the vicinity of the host tree. Perhaps the fruit was taken from that plant.

The nest had been rejected due to an unknown cause. The presence of such fruits is quite abnormal. Mud, cowdung and floral parts of certain plants have been reported earlier from the nests of baya but not fruits of *X. strumarium*.

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15. OBSERVATIONS ON SOME SNAKE-EATING BIRDS OF THE
CHILKA LAGOON, ORISSA

In the course of a herpetofauna survey conducted recently in and around the Chilka lagoon by the Zoological Survey of India, we had the opportunity to observe some ophiophagous birds while they were actually preying upon snakes, live and dead.

In the first instance we saw at Maltikuda Island, off Barkul, a White-bellied Sea Eagle (*Haliaeetus leucogaster*) beating a large sized Wart Snake (*Acrochordus granulatus*) to death on a rock and tearing its flesh with the beak. By the time we reached the spot the bird flew away after having partially eaten the helpless snake. Besides wart snake,

some other snakes like the Dog-faced Water Snake (*Cerberus rhynchops*) and the estuarine hydrophid (*Hydrophis obscurus*) found in the lake seem to be taken by the birds as evidenced by the presence of several dead and partially cut-open specimens of these species scattered all over the tiny island. In another instance recorded recently on the margin of the lake near Rambha, two house crows (*Corvus splendens*) were found eating a dead Dog-faced Water Snake. When the snake was picked up later and examined, it was found that the birds had fed upon the snake's slender neck and portions of the belly.

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